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Sent: Tuesday, March 07, 2006 9:11 PM
To: MLPACComments@resources.ca.gov
Subject: MLPACComments: On the Importance of MPAs

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To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to you as a college freshman at Santa Clara University in the Silicon Valley, and a new (permanent?) resident to the stunningly beautiful state of California. I have had my heart set on living here ever since my first exposure to the beauty of this region. At the time when I first looked at the expanse of the Pacific Ocean I only appreciated it for its beauty and recreation. Now, after graduating high school and starting to focus my collegiate studies on science, the environment, and spirituality, I have come to appreciate the ocean for much more than beauty alone.

Now I am able to see the practical, economic, and environmental "benefits" that the oceans give to all of humanity. However, these "benefits" are not free for humans to exploit at will. Rather, they are fruits of a universal existence that are necessary to sustain life on this planet. Without further regulation and expanded areas of protection, the production rates of the oceans will surely decline, the results of which can only be hypothesized.

It is not only for the survival of species, namely humans, that I feel that the oceans should be protected. Through my experiences in nature and what knowledge I have gained through all of my schooling up to this point, I have come to believe that nature, specifically the oceans, has value in and of itself, outside of the "benefits" that humans directly receive. Governor Schwarzenegger released in his ocean action plan a statement that we are "duty bound to protect" California's, and the rest of the world's, oceans. It is this "duty" that all humans have towards nature that is of concern to me.

The duty that all humans share comes from many different places, but ultimately points towards a common goal. Many people feel that their duty to be stewards of the earth comes from God, that they must respect His creation. Others naturally feel a reverence and sense of moral worth towards nature outside of any obligation by a god or otherwise. Others, still, only feel a duty to protect nature as far as humans can reap an economic reward from it. The irony in this last environmental ethic is that the eventual result of non-restricted exploitation is less harvest altogether! Regardless of the origin of the ethic, we as humans owe respect and care to the environment that set the stage for all of life as we know it. We need the oceans and the forests to sustain our lives. It is because of this fact that the natural world has innate value.

I ask of you this: to support the most inclusive of plans of package #2 of the proposed marine protected areas, and in addition express your support of the ideal of marine protected areas to other interested parties such as other state environmental leaders, as well as government officials, state and national. As you know, the state of California only has legal jurisdiction over the three miles directly offshore from the state. I request that you express the significance of the oceans and the necessity to protect them beyond that of the state of California's control to the Governor, that he may pass the message on to the president. For it is through the unification of the country, and hopefully world, in a like-minded effort to protect the oceans will the common goal be achieved.

Finally, I ask for greater financial support of government agencies and private conservation groups. Creating new agencies and task forces is useless unless they can have access to enough money to at least come close to completing what they were designed to do. I understand that it is nearly impossible to, say, completely eliminate illegal fishing in protected areas, but this can be better prevented with more patrol boats out on the waters. Without adequate funds, no group, private or governmental, will be able to accomplish their goals. As sad as this may be, money is the greatest indicator of values. If the ocean and the environment are truly at the top of your list, then I ask your budget to reflect these values. This will ensure that future generations will have the same environmental benefits that we have been lucky enough to experience.

We are all in this together, eternally bound to the confines of this revolving rock. If actions are not taken now to preserve this undeniably vital resource, it will be exhausted very quickly. Without the resources that the ocean provides, the overall quality of life on this planet decreases. Without adequate regulation to curb greed and waste, there will be too few resources to harvest.

Sincerely,

Michael Schuster